

Reunion Agenda

I. Display

- A. MES AMIES
- B. Calendars
- C. News-of-the-school
- D. MESOLAE

II. Opening remarks

- A. Welcome to reunion and Redeemer
- B. Prayer for meal
- C. *Introductions*

III. Letters from some who could not make it.

- A. Dr. Agnes Moffat ('25)
- B. Dorothy Walker ('39)
- C. Adrienna Adams Lea ('39)
- D. Netta Morrison Thompson ('36)
- E. Mary Barker ('25)

IV. Slides

- A. Letter from Kitty Pepler Hall ('22)

V. A word of thanks to all for coming and inspiring me in my dissertation

Attending:

MES students: 21

* Kay and Fred Green ('29)--St Thomas
June and Cliff Labbett ('41)--Toronto
pd * Helen Vizely ('36)--Oshawa
* Patty and Frank Sanders ('39)--St Thomas
Elizabeth Barron ('25)--Welland
Eleanor Kay ('36)--Toronto
pd * Pauline Hill ('42)--Toronto
Blanche Lynn and Husband ('41)--Kingston
* Dorothy Corbett ('39)--Ottawa
Dorothy Leggett ('41)--Almonte
* Peggy May Ruddick ('40)--Montreal
pd * Ruth Scott and daughter ('42)--Port Colburne
* Nora Wistow and husband ('34)--Toronto
Jean Burke and guest ('40)

Others: 8

Catherine and myself
Mom and Dad
Al Brown
Marian Ryks
John Vriend?
Betty Steenbeek

Regrets:

Dr. Agnes Moffat ('25)
Florence Riley ('42)
Wynfred MacLennan
Dorothy Walker

~~Florence Riley ('42)~~

Mail to:

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pd Mary Barker
pd Netta Thomson
pd Adrienna Lea
pd Joan Hillary ~~Brown~~ ('34)
Byl family (3X)

Elizabeth Karges Kay.
Peggy May Ruddick.

May 1, 1992

Dear MES Amies!

On April 28 I successfully defended my dissertation on the history of the Margaret Eaton School and want to thank you for the help you gave me. In addition I would like to invite you to an MES luncheon reunion and make my dissertation available if you would like a copy.

On Thursday, May 21, I would like to invite you and your guest(s) to a luncheon at Redeemer College, near Hamilton, Ontario (Map is enclosed). During this time you will have opportunity to visit with other MES alumnae, and I will be presenting some slides on the history of MES. The lunch will cost \$7.35 a person and will consist of soup, bread and rolls, sliced meat, sliced cheese, and a couple of salads, with some fresh fruit or cake for dessert. To assist the kitchen staff in preparing this luncheon I need to know ahead of time how many people are coming. Therefore, please let me know as soon as possible if you plan to come and how many guests you will be bringing. You could leave a message with the receptionist at Redeemer College, or call me in the evening at 416-387-6655. I look forward to seeing you there.

I have also reproduced copies of my dissertation (a little more than 550 pages) and would like to make them available to you. The cost is \$40.00 plus postage. If you plan to come to the dinner and would like to pick up a copy, then please let me know so I will have enough copies on hand. If you would like me to mail you a copy the total cost for the dissertation, including postage, would be (please include a cheque for that amount with your request):

Canada \$47.00
USA \$48.00

Overseas \$58.00

I also promised to send each of you an abstract. Instead I have enclosed the concluding chapter to my dissertation. In addition I have also included a list of current addresses I have for MES alumnae--perhaps you could travel to the luncheon together with someone who lives near you. Most of these addresses are correct, though some alumnae may have moved. If you know of other graduates not on this list feel free to invite them to the dinner--once again just let me know ahead of time if they plan to come.

During my research I have gathered a sizeable treasure of material on MES. Many of you may still have memorabilia, scrapbooks, photographs, minute-books, correspondence.... from the MES days. If at any point you wish to dispose of this material I would be delighted if you would entrust it to me. I would be happy to pay for any mailing costs. At present I probably have the largest collection of material on MES and I would love to see this collection developed.

Finally I want to thank you again for the inspiration you have been to me in my study.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

John Byl

The Margaret Eaton School, 1901-1942:
Women's Education in Elocution, Drama and Physical Education

By John Byl
April 28, 1992

A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of The State
University of New York at Buffalo
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Chapter Eight: Epilogue, Summary, and Conclusion

After offering forty-one years of educational opportunities in elocution, drama, and physical education, MES closed its doors. Its alumnae association and some of its faculty continued the work of MES, but no more classes were offered, and time began to eclipse the work and memories of this institution. The School's forty-one years were pioneering, and provide a glimpse into Canadian education of women during the first forty years of the twentieth century.

I. Epilogue

The faculty continued their promotion of women's physical education. Florence Somers taught at the University of Toronto till her retirement in 1949.¹ Dorothy Jackson taught at the University of Toronto and was actively involved in the promotion of physical education for girls and women, in badminton, synchronized swimming, aquatics, basketball, and volleyball.² From 1943 to 1946 she was Vice-President of the CPEA.³ At the time of her death, on April 9, 1967, she was the Director of the Department of Athletics and Physical Education for Women at the University

¹ "Personal Notes," (11 May 1949), in a file of the author, received from Eleanor Keyes.

² "Plan Course for Leaders," Telegram (8 March 1943): 8.

³ Bray, 128.

of Toronto.⁴

After MES officially joined the University of Toronto the Alumnae Association continued to try and keep former MES students together.⁵ How long they officially kept the association together is not clear. Charlotte Layton, who retired from the University in June of 1950,⁶ produced and distributed the M.E.S. Newsletter four times a year and, according to Jackson, "was an important link between the graduates."⁷ This newsletter was begun in the mid 1930s and continued into the early 1950s.

Most of the MES graduates kept contact with at least a few close friends from school, through annual Christmas cards, occasional visits, and phone calls. There was a school reunion in 1953, but after that it seems the Alumnae Association began to break apart. However, Elizabeth Pitt ('25) did organize a school reunion in 1975, more than thirty years after the school closed.⁸ The class of '39 has held reunions every five years from their twenty-fifth to

⁴ Munro.

⁵ Lois Russell Heaton and Adrienne Adams Lea to the "Graduates," November 24, 1942, UTA-DEPA, A87-0027/034; alumnae letters and invitations, in a file of the author, received from Eleanor Keyes.

⁶ Dear Alumna, from Helen Parsons, (15 March 1950), in a file of the author, received from Eleanor Keyes.

⁷ Jackson, 26; this position was also supported in an interview with Mrs. Kennedy Labbett.

⁸ File of the author, received from Elizabeth Pitt Barron--contains programmes and photographs.

their fiftieth in 1989, a tradition they hope to continue.⁹ In addition there is an annual tea, usually held in Toronto, a round-robin letter circulating, and an address list which is kept up to date. As a member of the class of '39 stated: "It was an unusual class indeed."¹⁰ The class of '41 also holds reunions every five years, with their most recent in the Fall of 1991 in Nova Scotia.¹¹ The class of '42, the final MES graduates, plan to hold a reunion on the fiftieth anniversary of their graduation in May of 1992.¹²

Contributing to MES's eclipse in Canadian history are at least four major factors. First, when MES joined with the University no central repository of an institution's history was maintained--portions of the archives are at the University of Toronto, Victoria College, Ontario Archives, Eaton Foundation, and the Metro Toronto Reference Library. Secondly, there is no building today that serves as a visible reminder of the school: it moved from its own building in 1925, to a rented building till the school closed in 1942. Over time both of these buildings were destroyed and replaced with office buildings and stores. Jackson commented in 1936 that the "old building at 415 Yonge Street will soon be gone. The memories and the

⁹ Correspondence with Ruth Corner, to the author, August, 1991.

¹⁰ Correspondence with Rhoda Wood Green, to the author, July 25, 1991.

¹¹ Correspondence with Gerry Dickson Rogers, to the author, July 2, 1991.

¹² Correspondence with Pauline Sellar Hill, to the author, January 1992.

reputation of the School will remain."¹³ But without a building memories fade more quickly. Also, the last students graduated in 1942, the youngest remaining graduates are in their early seventies, and as graduates die, the collective memories of the school go with them. Finally, since the school was amalgamated into a larger institution, the visible memories of MES were slowly swallowed up by the University. In the case of MES, the physical education demonstrations and September camps were the first to go. The scholarships were recently terminated. The Margaret Eaton Library is the only visible reminder of the amalgamation, but it has lost its integrity.

II. Summary

MES was an innovative school for women, which played an important role in the development of the Little Theatre Movement in Toronto, as well as in the advancement of Physical Education in Canada. It was founded by a woman, and its financial solvency was dependent on the assistance of a wealthy woman benefactor, Margaret Eaton, and later, to a lesser extent, the Eaton Company.

As a private school its founder, Emma Scott Raff, took the opportunity to develop an innovative curriculum in elocution, drama, and physical education. She emphasized individualized instruction, understanding the "unique needs"

¹³ "The MES Scene - April 1963," file of the author, received from Blanch Wellman Lynn.

of women, and the importance of proper elocution. In connection with individualization was an emphasis that people control their own destiny. The school offered an extensive part-time program, offered instruction in such things as, Shakespeare, physical education, and assisting those with a variety of speech and physical "defects." The school's curriculum was unique in its focus on expression during the first twenty-five years, and its curriculum included more contemporary writers, often controversial ones such as Ibsen, than was typical for other post-secondary institutions of the period. The school also provided a comprehensive physical education program, particularly from 1916 to the closing of the school. Not only was the school one of the first to develop these programs, it was very responsive to change. For example, when sportswomen increased their multi-sport participation in the Twenties and Thirties, MES was at the fore front of implementing these changes.

From 1901-1926, the curriculum, in elocution, drama, and physical education, was based on the philosophies of Ancient Greece, in which it was important to harmoniously develop the physical, mental, and moral aspects of a person. However, while that was stated, the physical clearly took an inferior position as reflected in a statement such as: "the body, by a reverential, assiduous care, is made obedient to the mind."¹⁴ This was despite Dr. Hutton's warnings to the

¹⁴ "The Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression," News (8 January 1907): 4.

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graduating class of 1919, that "classical scholarship was only an artificial and inadequate substitute, for neither Plato nor Aristotle had anything to offer the man in the street. They appealed to the aristocracy of intellect only."¹⁵ Perhaps this was appropriate since most MES students were hardly poor.

MES was the first institution in Toronto to develop the Little Theatre, and it produced the first Irish plays in Canada. Furthermore, a number of its students, most notably Dora Mavor Moore, became actively involved in theatre. When Hart House, considered to be "Flagship of Canada's Little Theatre movement,"¹⁶ opened in 1919, several of its players were MES graduates.

MES also provided one of the first and, until 1941, the most comprehensive program of instruction for those interested in teaching Physical Education. That this program was offered during a formative period in the development of physical education in Canada, underscores the importance of MES's role. Its program in Physical Education was the most demanding in Canada. In addition it took an early lead in Camp Education. MES was also one of the first institutions to provide organized recreation for women in Toronto. The school taught many teachers, and its

¹⁵ "Diplomas at Eaton School," Globe (2 June 1919): 10.

¹⁶ David Gardner, "Little Theatre and Amateur Theatre," 304; and Raymond Card, "Drama in Toronto: The Forgotten Years 1919-1939," English Quarterly 6, No. 1 (Spring 1973): 67.

graduates, particularly in the final period, secured jobs in their fields. Lenskyj acknowledges in her dissertation that aside from several free summer courses in physical culture offered at the University of Toronto, the Margaret Eaton School was the only option for female teachers seeking physical education instruction.¹⁷ The school's impact was most evident in Canada's Y.W.C.A.s and private schools. The school's importance was muted by Ontario's accrediting policy. This policy prevented MES graduates from teaching physical education in public secondary schools without going to the Ontario College of Education, even though MES offered a more comprehensive program in physical education than the Ontario College of Education. The University of Toronto's Bachelor's course in Physical Education would not have begun as quickly as it did, without the resources--faculty, students, building, and library--MES offered the University in their merger.

Finally, Mary Hamilton and MES played a key role in the development of the Canadian Physical Education Association by hosting its founding meeting. Faculty and students, most notably Mary Hamilton, Florence Somers, and Dorothy Jackson, held key positions in the CPEA and contributed numerous articles and book reviews to the Association's journal.

The history of MES revolved around four women: Emma Scott Raff, Margaret Eaton, Mary Hamilton, and Florence Somers. MES began as a small school of expression. Scott

¹⁷ Helen Lenskyj, "The Role of Physical Education in the Socialization of Girls in Ontario, 1890-1930," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983), 218-219.

Raff founded a school of expression in 1901. It was Margaret Eaton, beginning in 1906, who supplied the funds to provide visibility and permanence of this school. When she quit paying for the school in the Twenties, Scott Raff resigned, and the school's program shifted dramatically. Mary Hamilton continued the school's physical education department, without an active Board of Directors, to form the Margaret Eaton School in 1926. When she retired, in 1934, Florence Somers profitably administered a demanding physical education program. She eventually encouraged the school's merger with the University of Toronto and so permitted the establishment of Canada's first bachelor's program in physical education, beginning in 1941.

The governance of MES shows the importance of a wealthy benefactor to a private educational institution. In Toronto, there were several other small schools focusing on expression and physical education in the early nineteen hundreds, but none of them lasted longer than a few years. For this school, the difference was Margaret Eaton. She provided a building and paid the School's debts. When Margaret Eaton discontinued financing the school, its eventual closure followed. The Board of Directors and those who served on the school's advisory council were all from Toronto's elite, and played a role secondary to Margaret Eaton. Though O'Bryan argued that the Eaton Company was "understandably reluctant to see the passing of the Margaret Eaton School,"¹⁸ quite the opposite is the case. The Eaton

¹⁸ O'Bryan, 130-136.

Company provided a facility to house the school, but the building was bought for the Eaton's Recreation Club, which did not use the building during school hours. The Eaton Company was interested in terminating the school at the lowest cost to itself, while gaining the greatest positive publicity.

MES's faculty and student body consisted almost completely of women. The school provided an opportunity for women to teach women, some of its graduates taught full-time at MES, while many taught part-time. The faculty had a vision for women in expression, drama, and physical education. Especially noteworthy in this respect are the school's three principals. As was the case with women university students from 1900 to 1940, MES's students tended to be those who had considerable financial resources. Using the Blishen Scale,¹⁹ the fathers of MES students were mainly from the top seventeen per cent of the income scale. In addition to the full-time students, there were hundreds of part-time students in an extension program which was especially active in the second period. This program also catered to the wealthy and encouraged "high culture." The co-curricular activities, such as the various clubs and teams, plus residential life, were also used by the school to teach women how to live a high culture life, showing due recognition for the "frailties" of women. O'Bryan described the program as one in which ladies were "being 'finished'

¹⁹ B.R. Blishen, "The Construction and Use of an Occupational Class Scale," C.J.E.P.S. No. 4 (November 1958).



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